

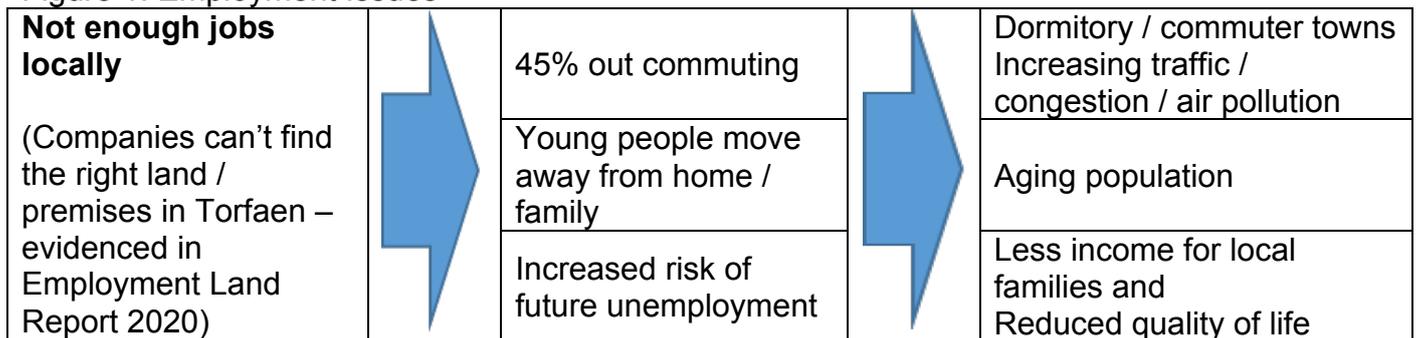
The Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Strategy Frequently Asked Questions: Llanfrechfa Strategic Action Area

The Strategy

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to achieve sustainable development – meeting the current needs of the population without preventing future generations from meeting their needs. This requires a careful balance of economic, social, environmental and cultural issues.

Planning Officers have looked at lots of the issues facing the residents of Torfaen (detailed at Section 3 of the Preferred Strategy) and have focussed on the following as one of the biggest issues with knock-on impacts that are likely to affect the most people:

Figure 1. Employment Issues



We have also taken into account the Torfaen and Welsh Government declarations of a climate emergency and the legal requirements for the country to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So our priorities for land use planning 2018 to 2033 are:

Prevent / Reduce above Employment Related Issues AND Climate Change

Starting Point 2020:

- 818 homes already built 2018-2020
- 1,638 homes with planning consent (of which 633 will be 'affordable' (for people on the TCBC Housing Register))
- Expectation of 888 new homes from unforeseen planning applications until 2033 (number of affordable unknown)
- 26 Hectares of Employment land from a proportion of remaining LDP allocations to be taken forward in the Replacement LDP with an additional 20 to 30 hectares also required. In order help assist with the delivery of this site a mixed use scheme including residential development is being proposed to help with site delivery i.e. providing infrastructure.

Proposal:

Our idea is to use residential development to pay for the preparation of new employment sites including roads, electricity and water services to encourage new and expanding businesses to move in / stay in the area. This could have a positive impact on all of the issues identified in Figure 1. An additional benefit of this idea is that the development would provide quality market and affordable homes (for people on the TCBC Housing Register).

The Welsh planning system requires **all** development to be based upon 'placemaking' which means it is designed to be unique – combining features of the location with useful walking and cycling paths, green surroundings for people and the local wildlife, provision of essential community facilities such as schools, playgrounds and local shops, all in a high quality design that connects the development to the 'place' and encourages people to build a sense of community. The two Strategic Action Areas named in the Preferred Strategy could both provide this opportunity.

Llanfrechfa Strategic Action Area: This site includes the Grange University Hospital, remaining grounds of the former Llanfrechfa Grange and various fields extending around and to the south. It is a larger site than that in the current Local Development Plan and there are several landowners. A life sciences and healthcare 'medi-parc' in close association with the hospital would form the employment focus with 1,200 new homes and a neighbourhood centre of a size to reflect the character of the other existing Cwmbran new town neighbourhoods. Planning Officers are still in the early stages of considering this site and have asked the landowners for more information and evidence relating to traffic, land quality, minerals within the ground and air quality. If the site continues to be considered, we will also need several ecological surveys, tree surveys, landscape impact assessment and a surface water assessment.

Q. 1 Why are you suggesting building on a greenfield site of high quality agricultural land? The development of brownfield land is always the first choice and the land within the Llanfrechfa Grange boundary meets this requirement. The possible use of the wider greenfield land is being considered to make the most of the opportunity at the Grange University Hospital. We have asked the landowners to provide evidence of the agricultural land quality which when submitted will be checked by Welsh Government. If high quality agricultural land is confirmed, national planning policy (which protects agricultural land) would need to be carefully balanced against the argument for the development. The consideration of the site remains at an early stage and we are not yet in a position to make such a decision at this time.

Q. 2 How can you justify the loss of green open space (impact on wildlife, walking, access to nature, mental health, climate emergency)? Sustainable development is a balancing act between economic, environmental, social and cultural issues. In this case, the potential positives of new high quality employment opportunities could have knock-on benefits to the issues in Figure 1. Protected wildlife and ways to address the climate emergency would have to be built in to any detailed proposal. The woodland, streams and the public rights of ways footpaths would be kept.

Q. 3 Where will the relief road go? How will the increase in traffic on Caerleon Road be dealt with? The idea of a relief road is to take traffic away from the homes along Caerleon Road which would be stopped up to form a cul-de-sac. The route of the relief road has not yet been decided. If the site remains under consideration, detailed proposals will be published with the full draft of the RLDP for public consultation, expected later in 2021.

Q. 4 Flooding in Llanfrechfa and Ponthir seems to have increased recently. Why would you increase the risk further by building on green fields? Planning Officers are aware of issues in the Llanfrechfa area that are currently being looked at by Torfaen's Drainage Officer. There is a recent legal requirement for any development to provide for surface water run off within the boundary of a site and this is assessed separately to planning. We would need to be assured that surface water run off could be captured within the site and would not flow downhill to existing homes.

Q. 5 Why have you undertaken a public consultation during a pandemic and what happens now? The Preferred Strategy consultation was originally due to start in March 2020 and at that time would have run for 6 weeks (the legal requirement) with public exhibitions in the main towns. The first lockdown immediately put the consultation on hold. By November, Wales had just completed the firebreak lockdown and there was general confidence in the libraries and Civic Centre being available for a period of 6 weeks for public access to the consultation documents. Planning Officers have a strict timetable for development of the RLDP agreed by both Torfaen Councillors and the Welsh Government. There was no overriding reason for further delay at that time. Having been repeatedly extended, the consultation is now due to finish on 30th April 2021. Planning Officers will collect all of the responses received in a Report of Consultation. The Report will provide a written response to each point raised. The Report of Consultation, once agreed by Councillors, will be published alongside the full draft of the RLDP, expected later in 2021.